

From *Asceticism and Society in Crisis:*  
John of Ephesus and the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*,  
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## PREFACE

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The Mediterranean world of late antiquity has in recent years gained popularity with scholars and the lay public both. A lacuna has been present in our studies thus far, however, in the case of a major and compelling writer from this era, John of Ephesus. Living in the sixth century, John led a varied career as a Monophysite monk, missionary, writer, and church leader. Two significant works by John remain extant: his *Ecclesiastical History* and his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*. John wrote in Syriac and his focus is often the eastern Byzantine provinces, especially his homeland Mesopotamia. But John's career took him throughout the empire of his day, and he knew the imperial court of Constantinople as intimately as he knew the villages of Amida's regions. John's writings are important in part because they concern a personal encounter with the full Byzantine world of his time, and in part because few writers from late antiquity have opened that world so vividly as he.

John lived through the period spanning the Monophysite movement's greatest successes and defeats. In his youth the Monophysites represented a formidable source of energy and creativity in the Byzantine realm; in his old age, John saw them not simply defeated but stalemated: discredited by the Chalcedonians on the Byzantine throne and incapacitated by their own internal bickerings. Within and beyond this frame of activity were the people of John's world. For John's home, the eastern provinces of Byzantium, the sixth century was above all a time of suffering. Their lands provided the battleground for war between Byzantium and Persia. Their monasteries and church communities, Monophy-

site in faith, endured persecutions by the Chalcedonian government. Famine and plague were chronically ubiquitous. It was a century when tragedy both accountable and capricious was the fabric of daily life.

John has received uneven treatment by modern scholars. Appreciation for his significance was first shown in the pamphlet by J. P. N. Land, *Joannes Bischof von Ephesos der erste syrische Kirchenhistoriker* (Leiden, 1856). Subsequent studies culminated in the monumental work of A. Djakonov, *Ioann Efesskiy* (Petrograd, 1908)—still the only monograph devoted to John. Further efforts followed, primarily textual, and critical editions of John's writings were published in the 1920s and 1930s, accompanied by translations into English for the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* and into Latin for the *Ecclesiastical History*. Nonetheless, John's works continued to be utilized mainly by Syriac scholars, while historians of the late Roman and early Byzantine periods persisted in sidestepping his contribution.

In recent decades, however, scholars of late antiquity have turned to a more comprehensive treatment of the materials available to us, and a greater appreciation for Syriac sources has been apparent. An upsurge in the interest shown for John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History* has accompanied this wider view, and not least because John's records contrast with the contemporary accounts of the Greek literati.

For the most part, John's *Lives of the Eastern Saints* have not shared the limelight. The *Lives* have been used primarily for the information they contain about certain key figures and events in the ecclesiastical crises of the sixth century. Such selective treatment bypasses both what John's *Lives* are about and what they have to offer—as may be seen in two notable exceptions to this situation, Peter Brown's "Eastern and Western Christendom in Late Antiquity: A Parting of the Ways" and Evelyne Patlagean's *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance 4e–7e siècle*.

This study is an attempt to bring John's *Lives of the Eastern Saints* into view. They provide a different perspective from that of his *History*. Rather than a chronological record of important events, one finds here what is often lacking in such records: the daily world of ordinary people, and how they coped with war, plague, famine, and persecution. Here one sees, above all, Syrian asceticism fully developed. Its practitioners are at home in the small world of the villager, and sometimes, too, in the larger one of the imperial court. But the Syrian ascetics also reflected their times. By the end of the sixth century, even the vitality of this movement had been worn down.

John of Ephesus and his *Lives of the Eastern Saints* provide an opportunity to learn about life in a time and place of drastic events. Here we

can see the ways in which those who have chosen extreme lives are forced by external circumstances into extremities even more severe. In writing the stories of holy men and women whom he had known, John shows us the confrontation between extreme experience and the human necessity of shaping that experience through narrative.

The hesitation that scholars have shown in the instance of John's *Lives* in fact stems largely from its literary form. For despite John's personal acquaintance with his subjects, and despite his professed intention to record in the *Lives* only what he himself has seen or can verify, hagiography alters both an author's material and its presentation. The nature of hagiography does not invalidate the historicity of John's *Lives*, but it does require that we read the text with a particular understanding.

Hagiography is a literary genre in which form is as important as content in understanding the text. Its task is to render the world of human experience comprehensible. It does this in two ways: first, by celebrating the saint (whether real or legendary) as one through whom God acted in the realm of human life; and second, by using a standardized language of literary *topoi* that identified the saint as saint and interpreted the saint's work as that of divine agency. Recognizing the formulaic, non-historical language of hagiography opens the route for treating the standardization itself as historical material. These texts offer us historical information, even in the most stringent sense, only if we can ask the appropriate questions. Standardization in hagiographical language is not a static matter. Favorite themes change; and the criteria of sanctity itself change in accordance with fluctuations in the values of society. Standard hagiographical themes, their periods of fashion and forms of expression, reveal the subconscious concerns of their societies and serve to establish a larger sense of order for those whom they are written to guide.

How, then, can we approach hagiography so as to evaluate the interaction of formulaic and historical material? The text must be heard on its own terms as well as in its hagiographical context; one must separate the standardized material from the author's perspective and establish how and why the author is using the hagiographic medium. There are clues internal to the text: the author's style, emphases, choices and viewpoints, and the author's position as distinct from the subject's. There are also external clues by which to measure the internal evidence: other sources—hagiographical, archaeological, archival, historiographical—and other information can be brought to bear upon the text. The consistency and coherence of a text, the interplay between an author's intent and content, analyses of comparative and contrasting material—all of

these matters are tools by which we can listen more carefully to a text. In the listening, we can discern what the text is saying, and what we can learn from it.

John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints* is a work of hagiography in the historical rather than the legendary tradition of saints' lives. Unlike many works of this kind, John's collection is not primarily stereotyped or didactic. It is a work incorporating a strikingly personal element, as John not only participated in much of what he sets down but also is actively present in his role as author. In the present study, John himself stands at the center. As will be seen, his individualistic manner is constantly apparent; more than a matter of style, John produces a form of hagiography peculiarly his own. His circumstances do much to encourage his individuality.

The purpose of the present study is to explore the relationship and interaction between asceticism and society in the sixth-century Byzantine East. In particular, we are concerned with how this relationship works for the Monophysite ascetics, what factors influenced it, and what the consequences and implications may have been.

How do we see the particular historical circumstances reflected in the ascetic experience John describes hagiographically? As John tells us, it was a time when stylites descended from their pillars to enter the arena of religious controversy; anchorites returned to towns and cities to care for the laity in the absence of exiled church leaders; exile became a part of monastic practice; the needs of the laity overrode the sentiments of bishops in the formation of a separate church hierarchy; and women took leadership roles they would otherwise have shunned. The situation of religious controversy was compounded by war with Persians, invasions by Huns, extended famine, bubonic plague, and collective hysteria. We can see the contrast of Mesopotamia in its calamity with the expansion and prosperity experienced elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire during the first half of the sixth century; we can see also the contrast of provincial life to that of the cosmopolitan centers, whether Antioch, Jerusalem, or Constantinople. Our goal here is to break the religious experience down into its component parts, in search of the meaning ascribed to the larger event.

Establishing the historicity of John's text is thus neither the methodology nor the point of this study, nor does it attempt to prove a thesis. Rather, it seeks to see a situation: What is the story John tells? How are we to understand it? This is not a book about John of Ephesus as a historian. I chose to write about his *Lives* because they are not the history of his time but rather the story of the people who live in his world. I will

utilize his *Ecclesiastical History* only as a complementary supplement to the *Lives*. My purpose is to understand what Syriac spirituality meant to these people, both those who practiced an ascetic career and those who did not.

Consequently, this is also not a book about the Monophysite movement, nor is its originating point of reference the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Rather, the point of origin is Syrian asceticism, its roots and development. In this particular instance, the ascetics are also Monophysites. While the church crisis colored their situation, as the book emphasizes, they are not themselves the entire Monophysite body (far from it), nor are they the reason for the separation of the churches. Their spirituality, their asceticism, and their responses to the crises of their times do not depend on their Monophysitism but rather on their Syriac heritage. The continuity of that heritage is ultimately more important than the change brought by persecution.

Because the material is generally unfamiliar to scholars and students of late antiquity, this study starts with an introduction to the Syrian Orient of the sixth century. I do this by focusing on particular texts that illustrate the themes important for John of Ephesus; there is a context in which the ascetic practice John records makes sense in practical as well as symbolical terms. Syrian asceticism did not develop through a sequence of events. It developed in a collective experience, in which individuals and communities pursued a variety of goals for various reasons. The people rather than the events were the determining factors, and they overlapped, clashed, and harmonized in patterns rather than in a clear progression. The same is true of the spirituality studied in this book. Events affected it and forced people to make certain decisions or changes; those circumstances are central to this study insofar as they reveal the people and their spirituality more clearly.

The first chapter then introduces John himself, his writings, and the literary issues of the *Lives*. The following chapters focus on those events that shaped John's collection: the development of asceticism in a time of crisis (chapter 2); the plague of madness in the city of Amida, as a collective societal response to the years of calamity (chapter 3); the impact of exile on monastic practice, and the functioning of monastic communities as refugee camps (chapter 4); mission, the breakdown of Byzantine imperial ideology in the East, and the formation of separate churches (chapter 5); the fluctuating position of women (chapter 6); and, finally, an assessment of John's hagiographical purpose (chapter 7).

In using John's *Lives* to the end, we will work with the awareness that John is writing hagiography for a specific reason and with a specific

intent. In order to see what John is doing and how and why he does it, the *Lives* will be treated throughout this study together with contrasting and complementary writings of late antiquity, both Greek and Syriac. We will seek to clarify the singular experience contained in the work. These are particular people in a particular world. To see them on their own terms and to hear their story as truly theirs is to touch history as a living thing.

Hagiography is about a theology of activity. The careers of the saints are one expression of this theology. The writing of hagiography is another.

Since no one can speak for John of Ephesus better than he himself, I have illustrated this study with his own words as much as possible. For the most part I quote from the translation of E. W. Brooks, though occasionally I have altered the text or, where noted, substituted my own.



John of Ephesus's World

# I

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## "THESE HOLY IMAGES": JOHN OF EPHESUS AND THE *Lives of the Eastern Saints*

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### JOHN HIMSELF

John of Ephesus, sometimes known as John of Asia, was born in the early sixth century around the year 507. He was from the territory of Ingilene in north Mesopotamia, which fell under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan city of Amida. The local population was a mixture of Syrians and Armenians. What we know of John's life is drawn from scattered references he makes in his writings; the time and place of major events, at least, can be arranged with fair certainty.<sup>1</sup>

John's many-sided career had a propitious start. Ingila's local stylite had been for some years a monk called Abraham, at the monastery of Ar'a Rabtha. When Abraham died, his brother Maro ascended the vacant pillar. The first miracle of Maro's new career was the saving of John's life.

John's parents had lost all their sons before the age of two, apparently because of a congenital problem. When John succumbed as well, they brought the dying child to Maro. Maro was new to the practice of holy medicine, and the ensuing interchange between stylite, attendants, and parents involved much confusion. The child appeared dead, and Maro's prescription of lentils inspired no confidence in his audience. But when finally the monks were persuaded to place the food in John's mouth, he suddenly revived. The stylite then commanded that the boy

be fed as many lentils as he could eat and be brought back to him in two years' time as his own son.<sup>2</sup> Thus by the age of four, John found himself received into the monastic vocation, under the tutelage of a great spiritual father.

Maro died when John was about fifteen years old. The young monk soon left Ar'a Rabtha "because of the proximity of family" and joined Amida's ascetic community, becoming a member of the monastery of Mar John Urtaya in the early 520s.<sup>3</sup> By this time, persecutions against the Monophysites had begun, and the Amidan ascetics were in fact living as a combined group in exile. John's move to their community marked the beginning of his many years of travel and activity as a Monophysite. This was not a matter of conversion to a cause; reflecting the hardened religious positions of his times, John seems never to have considered any other confession. Until the early 540s, John journeyed with his fellow Amidans, much of the time fleeing persecutors and living in makeshift conditions, but also, during periods of relative peace, visiting other monasteries and noted hermits. His travels took him throughout the East, down into Egypt, and across to Constantinople. It was during this period, in the year 529, that John was ordained deacon by John of Tella, himself in exile at the time, as part of an underground program of ordinations meant to replenish the depleted Monophysite clergy.<sup>4</sup>

John of Ephesus first came to Constantinople around the year 540. A large number of Monophysite refugees had settled in the imperial city under the protection of the religiously sympathetic empress Theodora. Upon his arrival, John seems soon to have become known at the court as well as among the Monophysite communities in and around the capital. In 542 the emperor Justinian, champion of Chalcedonian orthodoxy, enigmatically chose John to undertake a campaign of conversion among the pagans and heretics still flourishing in Asia Minor.<sup>5</sup> John's zeal for the task can hardly have served the Chalcedonian interests of the government, for it was while occupied in this way that he was consecrated titular bishop of Ephesus by Jacob Burd'aya, possibly in 558.<sup>6</sup> Still, his efforts on Justinian's behalf earned him the title Converter of Pagans. On missions through Asia, Lydia, Caria, and Phrygia, John claimed to have converted eighty thousand pagans and schismatics (notably Montanists) and received government aid to found ninety-eight churches and twelve monasteries.<sup>7</sup>

We have no evidence that John ever resided in Ephesus; instead, his base of operation remained at Constantinople. In the 540s he was given a villa by the chamberlain Callinicus just outside the capital, at Sycae, and there he founded a monastery with himself as archimandrite.<sup>8</sup> It

served as his home base until its confiscation by the Chalcedonians in 578. By 566, at the death of the Alexandrian patriarch Theodosius, John had become the official leader of the Constantinopolitan Monophysites. But the Monophysites themselves were now beset by internal quarrels, and John was caught in the effort to mediate between factions so opposed that their overriding cause was hopelessly weakened.

The accession of Justin II in 565 brought renewed vigor to imperial Chalcedonian commitment. In 571 the patriarch of Constantinople, John Scholasticus, initiated a new persecution, in which John of Ephesus was an obvious target.<sup>9</sup> From this time until he died, the Monophysite leader suffered imprisonment and exile. Age as well as despair over the state of the church—both within Monophysite ranks and in the wider theological negotiations—left John’s health and spirit broken. Nonetheless, he worked on his *Ecclesiastical History*, smuggling the chapters out of prison,<sup>10</sup> until his death, probably in 589.<sup>11</sup>

## JOHN’S WRITINGS

Amidst his many activities, John was also an important writer. Most of his two major works, the *Ecclesiastical History* and the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, remain extant, but large parts of the *Ecclesiastical History*, as well as other pieces, have been lost.

John’s earliest work appears to have been a description of the first Monophysite persecutions, perhaps in particular those conducted in the 530s by the patriarch Ephrem of Antioch and Abraham bar Kaili, bishop of Amida.<sup>12</sup> He may also have written a few years later an account of the Great Bubonic Plague that struck the empire in 542, but whether he left this as an independent work is unclear. A further work that has not survived seems to have dealt with theological negotiations in the early 570s, focusing on the general formula of unity discussed by Chalcedonian and Monophysite authorities in 571.<sup>13</sup>

Scholars have long held John’s *Ecclesiastical History* as a work of major import for the sixth century. It consists of three parts, the first covering the period from Julius Caesar until the death of Theodosius II, the second spans the period to 571, and the third to 588–589.<sup>14</sup> A few citations from part 1 are incorporated by Michael the Syrian in his *Chronicle*; considerably more of part 2 is quoted in large sections by pseudo-Dionysius of Tell-Mahre in his *Chronicle*, as well as by Michael, and these segments have been supplemented by further scattered references.<sup>15</sup> Part 3 has survived intact.<sup>16</sup>

John's early writings on the persecutions and Great Plague doubtless provided much of the material about those events in part 2 of his *Ecclesiastical History*. For these matters, his accounts of natural disasters, his intimate knowledge of the imperial court under both Justinian and Justin II, his provincial ties, and his detailed rendering of the internal Monophysite disputes, we are most indebted to his *History*.

A careless writer at the best of times, John's enthusiasm outweighed his patience. In the parts of his *History* composed while he was in prison or in exile, this tendency was aggravated by the circumstances. But John shows little regard for the discipline evidenced by fellow Syriac historians of the same time. Both the meticulous concern for detail (of prices and dates in particular) shown by "Joshua the Stylite" in his *Chronicle* and the careful preservation of documents found in pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor's *Ecclesiastical History* are missing in John's *History*.<sup>17</sup>

Yet by virtue of their fervor, John's writings provide an honest record that counterbalances the official (and Chalcedonian) histories, whether "secular" or "ecclesiastical," left by his Greek contemporaries.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps best exemplified by those of Procopius, Agathias, and Evagrius Scholasticus, these formal histories by Greeks constitute works in which literary protocol was at times more important than what was being reported.<sup>19</sup> Despite its many inaccuracies, John's *History* proves true to the nature and experience of his times in a way not possible for those writers more officially or literarily minded.<sup>20</sup>

In the late 560s John wrote and then expanded the *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, a collection of fifty-eight stories of Mesopotamian and Syrian ascetics whom he himself had known or met during his life, and whose religious careers were particularly inspiring.<sup>21</sup> The stories are told as vignettes interspersed with hearsay; their presentation resembles those of the *Historia Lausiaca* by Palladius, the *Historia religiosa* of Theodoret of Cyrrhus, and the later *Pratum spirituale* of John Moschus. E. W. Brooks has called the *Lives* John's "most characteristic" work;<sup>22</sup> it is certainly a personal one.

The major focus of the collection falls between the 520s and 560s. John anchors the chapters primarily by references to each subject's life before and after the commencement of the Monophysite persecutions, his pivotal landmark.<sup>23</sup> The order of the chapters follows the chronology of John's own life, and the shape of the whole reflects the influences at work on John in the development of his career. John's stories, then, are in part his own story.

The fifty-eight chapters of the *Lives* can be divided into two basic clusters: the first revolves around John's experiences as a youth in the

monastic communities of Amida's regions (chaps. 1–23), and the second concerns his experiences after leaving Mesopotamia, primarily in Egypt and Constantinople (chaps. 24–57). The final chapter (58) is devoted to the history of the Amidan monastery of Mar John Urtaya, to which he felt his greatest bond throughout his career. Odd chapters are out of sequence with this arrangement but probably indicate John's own lack of organization rather than mishandling in transmission.<sup>24</sup>

The first twenty-three chapters are set mainly in Mesopotamia. They are, by and large, longer, more detailed, and more personal than the subsequent chapters. These accounts describe the monastic setting in which John grew up, the kind of ascetic practices that provided his models, and the individuals who particularly influenced his vocation.

This portion of the *Lives* includes the following:

- Habib (chap. 1), an efficacious monk whose career fits well the pattern that characterized the holy man of late antiquity;
- Zura (chap. 2), Habib's disciple who became a stylite but went on, because of the persecutions, to provide an influential presence in Constantinople;
- Abraham and Maro (chap. 4), two brothers whose careers as stylites dominated the religious life of northern Mesopotamia for many years;
- John the Nazirite (chap. 3), Paul the Anchorite (chap. 6), Harfat (chap. 11), and Simeon the Solitary (chap. 23), whose anchoritic careers forcibly came to accommodate the altered context of persecutions;
- Abraham the Recluse (chap. 7) and Mare of Beth Urtaye (chap. 9), who came to the ascetic vocation late in life;
- Simeon the Hermit and Sergius (chap. 5), a solitary and his disciple who served as vigilanti of Mesopotamia's villages;
- Some who undertook the solitary life only to find it leading to involvement in the affairs of the outside world—Addai the Chorobiscopus, who instituted a profitable wine industry (chap. 8); two monks who could not avoid their callings as exorcists (chap. 15); Simeon the Mountaineer, who inadvertently became a missionary (chap. 16); Thomas the Armenian (chap. 21) and Abraham and Addai (chap. 22), who discovered their true vocation in founding monasteries;
- Virtuosi of private labors in the tradition of Syrian asceticism, who visited Amida's monastic communities to pay them homage (the traveling monks in chaps. 14, 17, 18, 19, and 20);
- Mary and Euphemia (chap. 12) and Thomas and Stephen (chap. 13), accounts of paired careers that integrate the life of contemplation and the life of service; and

Simeon the Persian Debater (chap. 10), notorious bishop of Beth Arsham in Persia.

In the second cluster John expands his setting. Like himself, most of these subjects have their roots in Mesopotamia and were forced out into the larger Roman Empire because of persecution. This section includes a number of Monophysite leaders; in the first section, only Z'ura and Simeon of Beth Arsham fit this mold. Yet John does not allot these two the same detail that he gives to his "local" celebrities, such as Maro, Euphemia, or Simeon the Mountaineer. This second section is approximately the same length as the first, but where the first section dealt with twenty-nine holy men and women, the second treats more than fifty. These chapters reflect too John's own altered position. He writes with more assertiveness, appropriate to his increasing authority in Monophysite circles during the years covered by these chapters.

This second section comprises the following:

Eminent Monophysite bishops—John of Tella (chap. 24), John of Hephæstopolis (chap. 25), Thomas of Damascus (chap. 26), the Five Patriarchs (chap. 48), Jacob Burd'aya (chap. 49), who is again treated with his comissionary Theodore (chap. 50), and Kashish (chap. 51);

Accounts of the ascetic community in Egypt, and particularly of the Monophysite refugees who fled there—the spiritual leader Susan (chap. 27), Mary the Anchorite (chap. 28), a hapless monk who stole and was rehabilitated by John of Ephesus (chap. 32), the wealthy patrician Caesaria (chap. 54) and the members of her household who followed her model John and Sosiana (chap. 55), and Peter and Photius (chap. 56);

Laymen who practiced asceticism in their "worldly" careers—Elijah of Dara (chap. 30), a second Elijah and Theodore (chap. 31), Tribunus (chap. 44), and Theodore the *Castrensis* (chap. 57);

Monophysite refugees who came to Constantinople and performed the ministry of service among its needy populace—Hala (chap. 33), Simeon the Scribe (chap. 34), Mare the Solitary (chap. 36), Aaron (chap. 38), Leontius (chap. 39), Abraham the Presbyter (chap. 40), Bassian and Romanus (chap. 41), Mari, Sergius, and Daniel (chap. 42), four deacons (chap. 43), and Isaac (chap. 45); some of these individuals assisted John on his missions to Asia Minor;

Accounts of what happened to the Amidan monasteries during their exile in the eastern provinces (chaps. 29 and 35), and to those monks who fled to the Monophysite monastic communities in Constantinople (chap. 47);

Paul of Antioch (chap. 46), who established a sizeable network of social services in a number of Byzantine cities; and Two accounts, one set in Amida and one in Constantinople, of holy fools (chaps. 52 and 53).

John did not intend to use his *Lives*, as he did his *History*, to record the Monophysite story, but there is necessarily much overlap between the two works. Both for him and for his subjects, the persecution of the Monophysites marked an irrevocable turn in their lives. Further, the persecution was fundamental to the vision of asceticism John propagated, for his purpose was to show how this drastic change had impact on the ascetic vocation as he knew it.

In his collection John writes of holy men and women whose ascetic activities give evidence of power in the temporal as well as spiritual realms. Often, their capacity for power has been gained in the testing of abstinence and withdrawal. But it is brought to fullness, as John presents it, only in the context of others: in the congregation of the ascetic community and, above all, in the needs of the lay society. What we find in John's *Lives* is a situation that belies an other-worldly focus for asceticism, and indeed the fundamentally timeless, ahistorical concerns of the hagiographer. Thus the *Lives* must be seen in their context, both literary and historical. John of Ephesus as author offers important clues.

## GENRE: CHARACTERISTICS AND CHOICES

Syriac hagiography was a well-developed genre long before John of Ephesus wrote. The passion narratives of the Edessan martyrs Shmona, Guria, and Habib; the *Life of Simeon the Stylite*; the *Life of the Man of God*; the *Acts of Sharbil*; and the *Life of John of Tella* by the monk Elias are examples, exemplary for both content and style. Moreover, the increasing Hellenization of the fifth and sixth centuries did not diminish the standard. Elias' *Life of John of Tella*, written barely twenty years before John of Ephesus wrote his *Lives*, is a masterpiece of Syriac literature, with a prose of elegant simplicity. But Elias' account was above all a product of the cultural fusion that marked the early sixth century in the Syrian Orient. Excellent Syriac translations of Greek hagiography were also easily at hand.

John of Ephesus chose for his subjects a free-ranging style of cameo portraits, the most informal of hagiographical genres and best represented by the earlier *Historia Lausiacæ* of Palladius and the *Historia religiosa*

of Theodoret of Cyrrhus. This genre took the form of collections of stories,<sup>25</sup> which might or might not be concerned with a biographical approach; a single incident would often suffice for the author's purpose. The style of these collections tends to be more informal than that of full-length vitae, but sometimes only by way of content; Theodoret's Greek surpasses what we find in many Greek *Lives* as far as language and style are concerned. The collections are notable for their roots in specific monastic communities; what they record are the traditions (often oral) of that community and the author's experiences within it.

John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints* share the main features of this collection genre, although his work is noticeably less serene than the collections of Palladius, of Theodoret, the *Pratum spirituale* of John Moschus, or the *Historia monastica* of the ninth-century Syriac writer Thomas of Marga. Religious controversy of one kind or another was present as a backdrop for each of these authors, but John alone integrates the religious and political upheavals of his time into the foreground of his collection. Nonetheless, John's *Lives* remain a monastic work, like the others of this kind.<sup>26</sup>

Thus John includes discourses on the ascetic life by solitaries and preachings on the temptations a monk or nun must expect to face.<sup>27</sup> He provides an exposition on "the basis of sound training," in which he describes the lengthy process through which a novice must pass before receiving the full habit in an Amidan monastery.<sup>28</sup> And, the final chapter of the *Lives* narrates the history of his own monastery of Mar John Urtaya, from its fourth-century foundation to his present time.<sup>29</sup> Again, his own experiences as a monk in quest of spiritual edification provide the loose (and familiar, in this genre) framework around which the *Lives* are set.

John's literary predecessors (so far as we know) were, however, men who wrote in Greek and not in Syriac; thus questions about John's bilingualism must be raised. What influence, if any, did these earlier works exert on John's collection? Is any cross-cultural borrowing apparent in John's choice of genre? Since John does not tell us anything specific in this regard, we can only assess circumstantial factors.

John was educated in a Syriac-speaking monastery known for its scholarly training.<sup>30</sup> At some stage he acquired a reasonable fluency in Greek, making possible his activities both as a Monophysite spokesman in the imperial court at Constantinople and as a missionary in Asia Minor where Syriac would not have been a language in use. Both Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca* and Theodoret's *Historia religiosa* would have been available to him on his travels in their original Greek.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, at least parts of both of these collections were also available in Syr-

iac translation during John's lifetime.<sup>32</sup> But the question of heretical associations damaged the reputations of both these works during John's day and may have determined whether or not John was acquainted with either of them.

Palladius was hardly free of controversy during his career, and his Evagrianism, in particular, led the Greek church to suspect his work of harboring improper elements.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, these issues did not affect the general popularity of the *Historia Lausiaca*, although tamperings at the level of manuscript transmission reveal conflict between the love accorded this work and the anxiety caused to the church by its author's spiritual loyalties.<sup>34</sup> But Evagrius was highly thought of in Syrian tradition; much of his teaching survives only in Syriac.<sup>35</sup> To a Syrian monk such as John of Ephesus, Palladius' Evagrian spirit would have presented no problem.

About Theodoret, issues were sharper. Controversy concerning him had been more extreme than for Palladius: the Second Council of Ephesus (the "Robber Synod") in 449 deposed him from his see at Cyrrhus. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 reinstated him, but the vindication of Theodoret's faith proved a major obstacle for the Monophysites as far as the decisions of this council were concerned. To the Monophysites, Theodoret remained categorically the enemy of Cyril of Alexandria. Their obstinacy on this point enabled Justinian to resurrect the issue of Theodoret's teachings during the Three Chapters controversy of 544–554, and the Council of Constantinople in 553 reversed the reprieve of Chalcedon, condemning Theodoret's anti-Cyrillian writings.<sup>36</sup> His very name would have been anathema to the Monophysites, particularly during the years of John's novitiate and priesthood, as sentiments over Chalcedon hardened.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, a number of Theodoret's more important subjects—Jacob of Nisibis, Julian Saba, and Simeon Stylites, for example—would have been known in the Syrian Orient through Syriac writings about them. By John's time, a Syrian monk did not have to read Theodoret's collection to study Syrian ascetic tradition.

But if John was familiar with either or both of these predecessors (which seems likely at least in the case of Palladius), their works appear to have exerted little influence on his *Lives* except, perhaps, by suggestion of genre. In contrast, Thomas of Marga in the mid-ninth century made his imitation of Palladius both explicit, by frequent references to him, and implicit, through an intentional parallelism in his stories with those by the earlier Greek writer.<sup>38</sup> No such modeling is evident in John's *Lives*. The astringent didacticism of Palladius' vignettes and the classicism of Theodoret's accounts offer no parallel for John's rambling nar-

ratives. Similarly, their contents, both in emphases and in ascetic vision, differ distinctly from John's. The presence of a similar literary format does not seem to indicate a decision by John to follow precise models but rather to choose the hagiographical mode most comfortable for him.

John's literary choices, then, tell us certain things about him. His purpose here is found in story more than in history; his interest lies in what people experienced in the context of the events they lived through. So in this instance he writes hagiography and not a historical chronicle (as in his *Ecclesiastical History*), anecdotal portraits and not biography. Moreover, John's concern as hagiographer is not with the specific impact of a key individual on the world (e.g., the *Lives* of Severus of Antioch and John of Tella), but with the shared witness and experience of a given community, the Amidan ascetics, and with the meaning of that community's presence in the world of its time.

## HAGIOGRAPHIC STYLE: ISSUES OF LANGUAGE AND CONTENT

The inhabitants of the Syrian Orient lived through a harrowing series of natural and political calamities during John's lifetime; at the same time they were caught in severe religious persecution. It is in fact the conditions of his day that prompt John to set these lives and events down in writing. He writes a collection because he has encountered many men and women who acted through devotion to the divine. The simplicity of that fact belies its profundity in this particular work and its particular historical setting. Again, he includes accounts of the great Monophysite leaders of his day—subjects for formal vitae by others<sup>39</sup>—but the majority of his chapters deal with a localized, geographically remote area and with people otherwise unknown to us.

With these choices, John declares his own understanding of the events of his times. The holy is not restricted to certain persons (nobles, leaders) nor to certain places (cities). It is found in the people and places of daily lives; it is found in the midst of the same events that would seem to deny God's presence. The *Lives of the Eastern Saints* are a restatement of one kind of world as another. So John's purpose determines his genre, hagiography, and also his hagiographical style, his use of the standard conventions of this literary form.

For John, action is the most important element of devotion to God. Hence writing is for him a functional task, an action he takes in response to an urgent situation. He sets for himself certain guidelines: the

appearance of familiar hagiographical themes, the use of material of specifically monastic intent, and the occasional pause to preach to his audience. But, unlike Theodoret, he is not mindful of his labors as a craft in themselves. When John uses the tools of the hagiographer's trade, he is simply being practical by using a language common to Christendom in order to make his point.

John's hagiographical style, his use of standard themes and images, is also subordinated to his purpose of re-presenting the events of his times through the lives of his subjects. In the context of hagiography, the tragedy, the calamity, the apparent defeat of the Monophysites all become the means by which God's grace is revealed. Hagiography as a literary form and the language of its conventions enables John to accomplish his task succinctly.<sup>40</sup> But at a practical level, this also means that John makes no distinction between literary conventions and his own perceptions.

John's lack of artistic concern blurs the boundaries in his accounts between the *topos* as a literary device and the motifs common in a historical sense because they represent traits of the ascetic as a figure in religious and societal life. That is, John employs standard literary images to express the common understanding of a holy man or woman as a religious persona.

Thus, for example, John employs the *topos* of a hostile assailant suddenly frozen in midair,<sup>41</sup> or likewise blinded<sup>42</sup> or struck fatally ill,<sup>43</sup> by the power of a holy man or woman—the standard means of presenting a saint's spiritual authority in tangible fashion.<sup>44</sup> Elsewhere, John's solitaries do physical battle with demonic forces,<sup>45</sup> in scenes reminiscent of similar ones from the *Lives* of Antony, Simeon the Stylite, and Daniel the Stylite.<sup>46</sup> The scene is a common personification of the saint's battle against temptation and the test of fortitude that marks initiation into the ranks of God's chosen. However, John also enjoys telling us about the idiosyncrasies of his subjects. He is committed, too, to portraying the cost in human terms of the tragedies around him. These interests conflict with the standardized nature of hagiographical formulae. Indeed, John seems unaware of the disjuncture in his narratives when a familiar formula clashes with the sensitivity of his portraits—as, for instance, in his chapters about holy women, where his stereotypic statements are at odds with the actual accounts he gives.<sup>47</sup>

Thus John uses common themes not to make his stories fit popular tastes but to present a particular understanding of the lives lived by his subjects. When the holy woman Euphemia dies, exhausted after a career of service to the needy, the reader cannot fail to see her story in terms of

an *imitatio Christi*.<sup>48</sup> But John has not molded her portrait to fit this typology; he tells us about so many quirks of Euphemia's personality that her individuality dominates the chapter throughout. Nor does Euphemia herself choose to present her dying in this light: her determination with regard to her vocation does not negate her humility. The parallel of Euphemia's life with that of the Gospels arises because John intends his audience to see what he himself has seen: Euphemia's life, and those like hers, can only be understood in relation to the work of Christ.

Similarly, John's two accounts of holy fools remind us that motifs might become popular, even standardized, and yet maintain their capacity to affect people's choices in their own lives.<sup>49</sup> His first story on this theme is presented in terms familiar to hagiographic romance, so much so that some have questioned the reliability of this chapter.<sup>50</sup> But the second story is clearly about a personal encounter that John has experienced. The text itself is awkward owing to John's memory of the incident. It is the task of the scholar to separate formulae from historic elements in a saint's life, but in John of Ephesus we see the reverse process: a formula or formulaic theme could help the Christian community to understand religious activity by expressing its meaning, and thematic legends could inspire genuine emulation (imitation) by real people.

In fact, the motifs that occur most frequently in John's *Lives* are not of a hagiographical character. They are traits that characterize the asceticism of the Syrian Orient. So John presents his ascetics as strangers in this world, an image that rests at the core of the Syrian ascetic vocation.<sup>51</sup> He draws out, too, the concern for hospitality within the ascetic's works.<sup>52</sup> Again, those monks or nuns truly blessed in John's eyes have the gift of tears<sup>53</sup> and of foreseeing their own deaths.<sup>54</sup> These and other features of the ascetic's activities have less to do with hagiographic portrayal than with describing what had become the trademarks of actual asceticism in this area.<sup>55</sup>

In this vein, too, we can understand the repetitive features in John's accounts of healings. In his stories barren women do conceive,<sup>56</sup> and sick persons are cured,<sup>57</sup> in standard fashion: the vehicle for the miracle may be a relic, such as a holy man's toenail (as in the case of Maro), or the commonly employed *hnānā*, a mixture of consecrated oil, dust from a holy place, and water used for liturgical as well as private devotional purposes. The possessed are exorcised by the sign of the cross or by a rebuke of the demon by the holy person.<sup>58</sup> But these methods are those that the holy man or woman generally used in society and are not drawn from hagiography alone.<sup>59</sup>

The use of familiar hagiographical language and tone provided John

with a convenient shortcut. The unmistakable literary conventions placed his subjects in the company of saints. John does not have to justify, as Theodoret did, the religious choices his subjects made; by John's time, hagiography had grown to be so much a part of popular piety that its language alone was sufficient to justify its content. John writes without contrivance; if his style includes hagiographical clichés, the earnestness of his effort fills them with fresh meaning. They represent the language in which he thinks and sees the world; they are the means by which he can enable his audience to share the same perception.<sup>60</sup>

## LITERARY STYLE: CLUE TO THE CULTURAL SETTING

True to his word,<sup>61</sup> John is no artist as a writer. The careless haste so prevalent in his *Ecclesiastical History* is seen more frequently in the *Lives*. The *History*, to be sure, was written in such adverse circumstances that John can easily be forgiven his lack of polish. But he wrote the collection of saints in considerably more comfort.<sup>62</sup>

Here John writes in a prose pompous, laborious, and enthusiastic. His bilingualism creates further problems. Lacing his sentences with frequent Greek words or phrases, he often uses syntax more Greek than Syriac. He tacks lines of participial clauses together, forming sentences of interminable length. Greek syntax can sustain a complex load such as this, but Syriac with its subtler syntactic structure does so with difficulty: the awkwardness comes through in translation. In fact, John is as careless in his thinking as he is in his use of language. He himself (like his readers) often forgets the point he is making, and he frequently changes subjects in midsentence.

The constant presence of Greek language in the *Lives* clearly indicates bilingual thinking rather than poor translation on the part of an intermediary. We might well presume that John could have written in Greek had he wished, though bilingual speakers tend to have a preferred writing language.<sup>63</sup> But John would have had no reason to use Greek for written work. From the time of Justin I's accession in 519, Chalcedonian orthodoxy had been the only imperially sanctioned Christian confession. Although persecution against the Monophysites was intermittent thereafter (but most serious in the eastern provinces), by the time that John of Ephesus was writing any serious possibility of reconciliation had long passed.<sup>64</sup> It was not John's intent to disseminate Monophysitism to a wider audience through hagiography: such an activity was neither practical in the given political climate, nor, by the

560s, a concern for the dissenters against Chalcedon. The work is written for a specifically Monophysite audience; John's use of Syriac, aside from being his natural choice of language (or so we must presume), also specified his chosen readership.<sup>65</sup>

The awkward use of Greek in John's written language also points to the cultural condition of his time, and so to the significance of his chosen hagiographic form. Greek language and culture had been intruding with increasing force into the world of the Syrian Orient. In John's day, however, Syriac literature still maintained its autonomous standards; a writer such as Elias in his *Life of John of Tella* could mold bilingualism into a creative literary form. John of Ephesus was not a craftsman. Nonetheless, he represents a kind of cultural syncretism that was at its peak in the sixth century: a fusion of the Hellenic and oriental thought-worlds and experience that still allowed an independent position for Syriac culture within the Roman Empire.

When John was writing, Syriac stood at a considerable distance from its later decline. To some degree, it held a higher position in terms of cultural respect than it had had at any earlier time, despite the fame, for example, of Ephrem Syrus. Learned Syrians were still not necessarily educated in Greek, as we know from the references to schooling in Mesopotamia that John makes in the *Lives*,<sup>66</sup> and the Syriac academies were thriving in Persia, though John would not report on these because of their Nestorian position.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, John's subjects reveal a genuine concern for the Syriac education of children, at least rudimentarily in the reading of Scripture and more strictly for those entering the monastic life; this determination for literacy, even if only at a basic level, is shown in John's *Lives* to be present in villages as well as in the more sophisticated cities.<sup>68</sup>

To be sure, the ethos of the later Roman Empire laid certain constraints on cultural interchange. The responsibility for bilingualism lay on the non-Greek; translations in both directions were invariably done by those who were native Syriac speakers.<sup>69</sup> Yet Syriac seems to have gained some respect from the elite world of Greek culture. For in the fifth century, sources tend to represent Syriac as a problem for the mainstream empire and those Syrians who could not speak Greek were cause for ridicule.<sup>70</sup> But by the sixth century, sources seem to be more judicious: for the Armenians, Syriac ranked with Greek in scholarly status,<sup>71</sup> and, indeed, respect was accorded even by Greeks to the educated person who was trained in Latin, Greek, and Syriac.<sup>72</sup> For the Greek cultural elite, Armenian was a language quite outside their interests;<sup>73</sup> but the serious Greek historian followed the example of Eusebius of Caesarea and

employed a Syriac assistant who could provide access to Syriac archives and documents.<sup>74</sup> Again, the Syrian continuator who produced the Syriac version of Zachariah Rhetor's *Ecclesiastical History* showed enough initiative to epitomize rather than translate, and to continue the work, adding a significant and solid piece of historical writing to the original and producing in effect a "new" *History* in the process of re-rendering the old.<sup>75</sup> Despite the cultural imperialism of Greek, Syrians were proud of their language. John of Ephesus records the relief shown by a group of Amidan ascetics in Egypt who stumbled across one of their own kind: "and the blessed men . . . saw that he was an educated man and spoke their language."<sup>76</sup>

Although John of Ephesus writes of asceticism in a geographically remote area of the Roman Empire, the villages of Mesopotamia were not isolated from the context of the empire as a whole, any more than Syriac was an insulated provincial language. John's linguistically hybrid style in fact conveys his setting: a synthesis of cultural experience that characterized the world of late antiquity.<sup>77</sup>

John's *Lives of the Eastern Saints* are not a Syriac work in a Greek literary genre; they are part of a larger context. But they resemble the collections of his literary predecessors in form only, and it is in the concrete differences of content, both narrative and perceptual, that we can understand John's independence from what preceded him and, indeed, that we can find his worth as a hagiographer.<sup>78</sup>

## ABBREVIATIONS

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For dictionaries, encyclopedias, and collections, full details may be found in the Bibliography.

AER	<i>American Ecclesiastical Review</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AMS	<i>Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum</i>
Anal. Boll.	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
Annales: e.s.c.	<i>Annales: économies, sociétés, et civilisations</i>
BEO	<i>Bulletin d'études orientales</i>
BHG	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca</i> , 3d ed., edited by F. Halkin; and <i>idem</i> , <i>Novum Auctarium BHG</i>
BHO	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis</i> , edited by P. Peeters
BMGS	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
BZ	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CH	<i>Church History</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CSCO	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i> , <i>Scrip-</i> <i>tores Syrii</i> (unless otherwise noted)
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
CSL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum</i>
DHGE	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques</i>

DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
DR	<i>Downside Review</i>
DTC	<i>Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique</i>
ECR	<i>Eastern Churches Review</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HE	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JAC	<i>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JME	<i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i>
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OCA	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OLP	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
PETSE	Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i> , edited by J. P. Migne
PO	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
POC	<i>Proche-Orient Chrétien</i>
RBK	<i>Reallexicon zur Byzantinischen Kunst</i>
RE	<i>Paulys Realencyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
REJ	<i>Revue des études juives</i>
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
ROC	<i>Revue de l'orient chrétien</i>
SCH	Studies in Church History, edited by D. Baker, G. J. Cuming, S. Mews, et alii
SLNPNF	Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers

SSTS	Studies Supplementary to Sobornost
Sub. Hag.	Subsidia Hagiographica
TU	<i>Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>
ZK	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>

Note on primary sources: For individual saints' lives not in major collections (e.g., John of Ephesus, *Lives*), see under *Vita* \_\_\_\_\_.

*the Monophysite Movement*; and Wigram, *Separation of the Monophysites*. The tumultuous atmosphere is well caught in John of Nikiu's account of the Constantinopolitan riots, *Chronicle* 89.39–68; but the background is equally volatile. For example, Evagrius, *HE* 3.30–44; "Chronique melkite," ed. and trans. A. de Halleux, chaps. 13–14; and Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 9.8–10. Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters*, vividly portrays the sense of uncertainty and danger felt even at Severus' level of leadership. See also Darling, "Patriarchate of Severus."

140. Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 4, 224, 363. Egypt's resources were well worth keeping within imperial reach. See Johnson and West, *Byzantine Egypt*, for the wealth of the church esp. 66–72, 252–54; and Wipszycka, *Ressources et activités économiques*.

141. Hardy, *Christian Egypt; Jews and Christians in Egypt*, ed. and trans. H. I. Bell; Frend, "Popular Religion"; Gregory, *Vox Populi*, esp. 129–61, 163–201.

142. For example, Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters*, 1.49–50, 53, 5.11, 5.15.

143. *Vita Severi* (Zachariah Rhetor), ed. and trans. M.-A. Kugener; *Vita Severi* (John of Beith-Aphthonia), ed. and trans. M.-A. Kugener; Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 1.49–50. Cf. Hardy, *Christian Egypt*, 111–32.

144. Severus of Antioch, *Sixth Book of Select Letters* 5.11. That Egypt lived up to this guiding role is clear from John of Ephesus' *HE*; see *Fragmenta*, ed. E. W. Brooks, 3.7–8. Cf. Hardy, *Christian Egypt*, 120–43.

145. The consequences of the Plague have until recently rarely been acknowledged. We have three contemporary sources of information: Procopius,  2.22–23; Evagrius, *HE* 4.29; and John of Ephesus, *HE*, in pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 79–89, 94–110, 112, 119. See chapter 3 below for discussion of these and recent scholarship.

146. Chapter 3 attempts to make clear the actual conditions of the eastern provinces at this time. The material discussed there complements, at least to some extent, the vicious denunciation of Justinian's treatment of the eastern provinces that Procopius gives in the *Anecdota*. Browning, *Justinian and Theodora*, 60–61, discusses examples of Justinian's occasional imperial munificence, especially in cases of disaster. Cf. Vasiliev, *Justin the First*, 344–88.

147. See esp. Vasiliev, *Justin the First*; and Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique*, 74–112.

148. Justinian and his contemporary historians are discussed in chapter 4. See esp. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*.

## I. "These Holy Images": John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints

1. A. Djakonov, *Ioann Efesskiy* (Petrograd, 1908), provided the most important breakthrough in postulating a biographical framework. The two best summaries, both dependent on Djakonov's work, are E. W. Brooks' Introduction

to John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, PO 17: iii–xv, and Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites*, 207–15. See also “Jean d’Éphèse,” *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 8, cols. 484–86 (D. Stiernon). John speaks of his childhood, training, and monastic travels in his *Lives*, while information about his missionary and ecclesiastical activities is mostly found in parts 2 and 3 of his *Ecclesiastical History* (see nn. 15 and 16 below). I will elaborate on places and events mentioned here in later sections.

2. John of Ephesus, *Lives* 4, PO 17:59–64.
3. Ibid., 84, 35; PO 18:608–9.
4. Ibid., 24, PO 18:516–22.
5. John of Ephesus, *HE*, in pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 77–78, 125.
6. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 50, PO 19:153–58.
7. Ibid., 47, PO 18:681. Cf. pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 77–78 (seventy thousand converts, fifty-five churches built at public expense, forty-one from contributions by new converts).
8. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 36, PO 18:624–25; and 38, PO 18:644. On Callinicus, see Brooks’ Introduction to *Lives*, PO 17:vi.
9. This final period of John’s life, after 566, is covered in his *Ecclesiastical History*, parts 2 and 3.
10. John speaks of his imprisonment under Justin II, and of other abuses, in his *HE* III (ed. Brooks), i.17, ii.4–7, 41, 44. For the conditions under which he wrote and circulated the final part of his *History*, see *ibid.*, ii.50. For the texts, see n. 16 below.
11. His death was not in 586, as long held; for this important piece of redating see Allen, “New Date.”
12. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 35, PO 18:607; and *HE* in pseudo-Dionysius, *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, 39. Brooks would date this work to 537 (Introduction to *Lives*, PO 17:vi), following Ephrem’s “descent to the east” of 536–537. But John’s chronological reference in the *Lives* is vague enough to allow for a slightly later date, and one might take into account that the consequences of Ephrem’s activity lasted far longer than that year. Perhaps John waited until his arrival at Constantinople in 540 to write this?
13. For both these works, see Brooks’ references in the Introduction to John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 17:vi.
14. See Allen, “New Date,” for the final date.
15. Fragments of part 2 were published in *Anecdota Syriaca*, ed. J. P. N. Land, 2:289–330, 385–92. Those found in pseudo-Dionysius’ *Incerti auctoris chronicon* were further elaborated and annotated by Nau in “Étude sur les parties,” and in John of Ephesus, “Analyse de la seconde partie.” The best text for the fragments in pseudo-Dionysius is found in *Incerti auctoris chronicon*, ed. I.-B. Chabot, CSCO 104/53. More fragments were published by E. W. Brooks in John of Ephesus, *Historiae ecclesiasticae fragmenta*.
16. John of Ephesus, *Historiae ecclesiasticae pars tertia*, ed. and trans. E. W.

Brooks. See also Honigmann, "Histoire ecclésiastique de Jean d'Éphèse." An earlier version was edited by W. Cureton (Oxford, 1853) and translated by R. Payne-Smith, *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John, Bishop of Ephesus* (Oxford, 1860).

17. The sole document John includes is the *Henoticon*; he seems to have drawn only on Malalas as a Greek source, cf. Brooks' Introduction to John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 17:xii–xiii. Discussion of mutual influences between Greek and Syriac cultures can be found in Peeters, *Orient et Byzance*.

18. The theoretically separate literary genres of secular and ecclesiastical histories had long faced mutual infringement of their respective territories. See, for example, Cameron and Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition"; Downey, "Perspective of Early Church Historians"; and Momigliano, "Popular Religious Beliefs."

19. Even these writers, so consciously traditional, could not successfully maintain their chosen narrative boundaries. See Allen, *Evagrius Scholasticus*; Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*; and idem, *Agathias*.

20. See, for example, Allen, "Justinianic' Plague"; Cameron, "Empress Sophia"; and idem, "Early Religious Policies."

21. Brooks' edition in *Patrologia Orientalis* was preceded by *Anecdota Syriaca*, ed. J. P. N. Land, 2:2–288, with a Latin translation by J. P. N. Land and W. J. van Douwen, *Commentarii de Beatis Orientalibus*. There are two possible exceptions to John's practice of firsthand knowledge. His account of Abraham of Kalesh, *Lives*, 4, took place before he was born. Also, some scholars think the story of the two holy fools in Amida, *Lives*, 52, is a pious fiction, but I do not; see the later discussion, pp. 91–93 and the notes thereon.

22. Introduction to John of Ephesus, *Lives*, PO 17:vi.

23. These officially began in 519, soon after the accession of Justin I, though they may not have reached Mesopotamia until 520 or 521. See chapter 3.

24. On the manuscript tradition of the *Lives* and questions on their transmission, see Brooks' Introduction to *Lives*, PO 17:iii–xv. John's *Lives* survive almost intact as a collection and are independently attested in the *Chronicles* of both pseudo-Dionysius and Michael the Syrian, each of whom gives a chapter list for the work. See the discussion by Brooks in his Introduction, *Lives*, PO 17:ix–xii.

25. On hagiography in general, see Delehaye, *Legends of the Saints*; and Aigrain, *Hagiographie*. For this particular genre, introductions to the primary collections can be found, for example, in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 1, cols. 1624–34; and for the early collections, Quasten, *Patrology*; and Altaner, *Patrology*. Duval, *Littérature syriaque*, 113–53, is arranged by literary categories and thus places the Syriac collections in relation to the martyr cycles and lives of the saints. The sources on which I base my generalizations are Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* (for the texts, see nn. 31 and 32 below); Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Historia religiosa* (for the texts, see nn. 31 and 32 below); John Moschus, *Pratum spirituale*, trans. M.-J.

Rouët de Journel; John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*; and Thomas of Marga, *Historia monastica, Book of Governors*, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge.

26. For the contrast between the monastic interests of these collections, and the different (often society-oriented) interests in standard vitae, cf. Patlagean, “À Byzance”; Brown, “Rise and Function”; and Hackel, *Byzantine Saint*, esp. 117–68.

27. Especially in John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 3, 5, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 27, 29, 32.

28. Ibid., 20, PO 17:278–83.

29. Ibid., 58, PO 19:206–27.

30. Ibid., 24, PO 18:521.

31. Palladius, *Lausiac History of Palladius*, ed. and trans. C. Butler; the work also has been translated and annotated in *Palladius: The Lausiac History*, trans. R. T. Meyer. For Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Théodore de Cyr, Histoire*, ed. and trans. P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen; there is now an English translation with notes in *Theodore of Cyrrhus, History*, trans. R. M. Price; see also the general discussion in Canivet, *Monachisme syrien*.

32. For sixth-century Syriac manuscripts that contain selections from Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*, see Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts* 3. The Old Syriac texts have now been edited by R. Draguet, *Formes syriaques*. The seventh-century Syriac translation by Anan-Isho in fact was a collection of earlier Syriac renditions of Palladius, Jerome, and other stories and *apophthegmata*; see Anan-Isho, *Book of Paradise*, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge. On the Syriac versions of Theodore's *Historia religiosa*—mainly select chapters—cf. *Théodore de Cyr, Histoire*, ed. and trans. P. Canivet and A. Leroy-Molinghen, 1:60–63.

33. See Hunt, “Palladius of Helenopolis”; and Draguet, “Histoire lausiaque.”

34. Cf. Turner, “Lausiac History of Palladius,” esp. 345–51.

35. See Draguet, “Histoire lausiaque”; A. Guillaumont, *Les “Kephalaia Gnostica” d’Evagre le Pontique et l’histoire de l’origénisme chez les grecs et chez les syriens*, Patristica Sorbonensis 5 (Paris, 1962); and Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* 2:308–10.

36. In general, cf. Frend, *Rise of the Monophysite Movement*.

37. John Rufus, *Plérophories, témoignages et révélations*, written about 512, well illustrates the venom of Monophysite anti-Chalcedonian sentiments. Ironically, one thirteenth-century manuscript, Paris Syr. 234, contains extracts both from Theodore's *Historia religiosa* and from John of Ephesus' *Lives*!

38. Cf. Thomas of Marga, *Historia monastica, Book of Governors* 1, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge.

39. Notably John of Tella, Severus of Antioch, and Jacob Burd'aya. See chapter 5 below.

40. On standard hagiographical formulae see, for example, Delehaye, *Legends of the Saints*; idem, *Cinq leçons*; and Festugière, “Lieu commun.”

41. For example, John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 2, PO 17:20 (Z'ura); 23, PO 17:303 (Simeon the Solitary).

42. *Ibid.*, 4, *PO* 17:81–82 (Maro).

43. *Ibid.*, 1, *PO* 17:10 (Habib).

44. See, for example, John Moschus, *Pratum spirituale* 15, 20, 21, 99; Procopius, *Wars* 1.7.5–11. In general, see the discussions on motifs in Delehaye, *Legends of the Saints*; Festugière, “Lieux communs”; and idem, *Moines d'orient* 1.

45. *Lives*, 6, *PO* 17:112–16 (Paul the Anchorite); 27, *PO* 18:549–50, 555–57 (Susan).

46. *Vita Antonii*, chaps. 8–10; *Vita Simeonis Stylitae*, *AMS* 4:523, 529, 535–38; *Vita Danielis Stylitae*, chap. 14 (where Daniel recalls the model of Antony), 15, 18.

47. See chapter 6.

48. *Lives*, 12, *PO* 17:171–86. For the understanding of hagiography in terms of the *imitatio Christi*, see Drijvers, “Byzantine Saint”; and esp. Patlagean, “À Byzance.”

49. *Lives*, 52, *PO* 19:164–79 (The Two Antiochenes); 53, *PO* 19:179–85 (Priscus). See the discussion of these pp. 91–93.

50. de Gaiffier, “Intactam sponsam relinquens.”

51. Especially in *Lives*, 8 (Addai), 12 (Mary), 16 (Simeon the Mountaineer), 17 (the poor stranger), and 29 (Malkha).

52. Especially in *Lives*, 5 (Simeon and Sergius), 23 (Simeon the Solitary), and 33 (Hala).

53. For example, *Lives*, 3 (John the Nazarite), 14 (Abbi), and 29 (Malkha).

54. For example, *Lives*, 29 (Malkha), 45 (Isaac), and 55 (Sosiana).

55. These and other characteristic traits are discussed at length in Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*.

56. *Lives*, 1, *PO* 17:12; 4, *PO* 17:69–71.

57. For example, *ibid.* 2, *PO* 17:20; 4, *PO* 17:60–65.

58. *Ibid.*, 1, *PO* 17:14–15; 3, *PO* 17:42–43; 15, *PO* 17:220–24.

59. For example, Brown, “Rise and Function.”

60. For an analysis of a specific case where John employs a motif literally that occurs thematically (and so literarily) elsewhere in hagiography, see Harvey, “Physicians and Ascetics.” In this instance, the motif involves how a hagiographer writes about disease and illness when they occur in a saint, as opposed to such an occurrence in a layperson. Another clear example is John’s striking treatment of women; see chap. 6.

61. *Lives*, Preface, *PO* 17:2.

62. The collection probably was written while John was living in his monastery outside Constantinople. John became leader of the Monophysites there in 566. The *Lives* appear to have been written between 566 and 568. See Brooks’ comments in his Introduction to *Lives*, *PO* 17:vii.

63. We are still lacking sufficient work on bilingualism in the ancient world, though much ground has been broken in Peeters, *Orient et Byzance*; Brock, “Some Aspects of Greek Words”; idem, “Greek Words in the Syriac Gospels”; and idem, “Review of M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*,” *JTS* 20 (1969): 276–78.

64. See chap. 4.

65. Cf. Allen, *Evagrius Scholasticus*, 51, on John and other church historians of late antiquity who direct their writings only to those who are like-minded.

66. Cf. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 1, PO 17:15–16; 5, PO 17:89–90; 16, PO 17:246; 24, PO 18:521; 58, PO 19:206–27. John alludes to the scholarly training of Mare, bishop of Amida, in *Lives*, 13, PO 17:190; we know more precisely that Mare was learned in Greek as well as Syriac from pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *HE* 7.5. For an example of what kind of library a Syriac monastery might have, see Wallis Budge's comments in Thomas of Marga, *Historia monastica, Book of Governors* 1.lix–lxiv. John of Ephesus mentions that teaching was an occupation ascetics sometimes undertook: *Lives* 5, PO 17:89; 16, PO 17:246. But the monks of Beth Abhe in the seventh century were so opposed to running a school in their monastery that the majority of them mutinied and left when such a proposition was put to them, claiming that they could not fulfill their religious vows with the distractions and noise of a school around them. See Thomas of Marga, *Historia monastica, Book of Governors* 2.7–10.

67. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*; and see the surveys in the literary histories by Wright, *Short History of Syriac Literature*; Duval, *Littérature syriaque*; and Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*.

68. *Lives*, 1, PO 17:15–16; 5, PO 17:89–90; 16, PO 17:246. But see Segal, "Mesopotamian Communities."

69. Cf. Brock, "Aspects of Translation"; and idem, "Greek into Syriac."

70. For example, *Vita Danielis Stylitae* 3, 10, 14, 17, 19, 28; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Historia religiosa* 5, 6, 8, 14.

71. Cf. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 21, PO 17:283–98; and cf. Peeters, *Orient et Byzance*.

72. John of Ephesus, *Lives* 21, PO 17: 283–98; and Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Euthymii*, 37 (text in *Kyryllos von Skythopolis*, ed. E. Schwartz).

73. *Vita Sabae* (Cyril of Scythopolis), 20 and 32, where Armenian monks are allowed to use their own language for only part of the worship services, and only as a gesture to prove how accommodating Saint Sabas and the Patriarch of Jerusalem (in this case, Elias) could be.

74. Cameron, "Agathias on the Sassanians."

75. For the text see pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. and trans. E. W. Brooks; and in English translation, *Syriac Chronicle*, ed. and trans. F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks. See the discussion in Allen, "Zachariah Scholasticus."

76. John of Ephesus, *Lives*, 13, PO 17:190.

77. Cf. Brown, *World of Late Antiquity*.

78. For a contrast beyond the scope of this study, Brown, "Eastern and Western Christendom," provides an excellent comparison of the *Lives* of John of Ephesus with those of his Latin contemporary, Gregory of Tours. The insights offered can be compared with those put forth from a different perspective by Nelson, "Symbols in Context."

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